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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Soviet Germany

One conclusion is hard to avoid in any analysis of the shooting of U.S. Army Maj. Arthur D. Nicholson Jr. in East Germany Sunday: Soviet authorities at some level intended that the major should die. Even after he was shot twice, Soviet soldiers prevented his aide, Sgt. Jessie G. Shatz, from giving first aid, and didn't provide medical attention themselves until a half-hour after a Soviet medic arrived on the scene. The U.S. State Department described this as "murder," an apt characterization.

It should not be particularly surprising that official murder is part of the Soviet political repertoire. A member of the French army's observation team in East Germany was killed a year ago when his car was rammed by an East German military truck. The Polish secret police, who like most other East European secret police are effectively controlled by the Soviet KGB or GRU, murdered a troublesome Catholic priest last year. The Bulgarian secret police arranged the 1981 attempt on the pope, in yet another Kremlin response to the Polish crisis. It is useful as well to remember that the entire border dividing the two Germanys is rigged with automatic firing mechanisms to murder anyone attempting unofficial emigration, and, incredibly, the entire border of the vast Soviet Union itself is a no man's land as well.

Maj. Nicholson was in East Germany by right. But rights, like truth, are not something the Soviets take seriously. They have repeatedly cheated on or trampled on the 1947 four-power agreement governing occupation of Germany. Early on, the Western allies had to resort to the Berlin airlift to overcome one such Soviet violation. A protocol in the Yalta declaration guaranteeing free elections to the people of Eastern Europe was laughed at as the Red Army and local Soviet stooges destroyed any East European politician with the courage to demand that the promise be kept.

Soviet methods of controlling East Europe today are based on the model tyrants have used down through the centuries to manage unwilling sub-

jects. Soviet troops strategically deployed in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary have the primary duty of holding down the people in those countries and only a secondary concern about potential conflict with the West. During the 1980-81 Polish crisis, it became clear to the Polish army that the Russians, whose own troops were poised across the border as well as inside Poland, controlled all communications systems; any Polish officer with a thought of joining in a rebellion against the occupying army knew that he would have no contact with other Polish units. Security police in East Bloc nations have been trained by the KGB and remain under effective KGB control. One of their tasks is to infiltrate all the crucial instruments of police and military power. Thus, even though the Polish Communist Party is a limp rag, the Soviets can still control the country.

In Czechoslovakia, the game after the Prague spring of 1968 was to put the Communist Party in the hands of the Slovak minority, who had never before had it so good and held no great love for the Czech majority. Minority rule is an effective imperialist gambit, well known in the Czarist and Ottoman empires, among many others.

In short, the Warsaw Pact is not an "alliance" in the sense that NATO is an alliance. The Warsaw Pact armies are simply extensions of the Soviet Red Army. The people themselves, given the choice, would readily choose not to be under Soviet control.

The shooting of an American officer or the killing of a French soldier is part of the process of reminding the world, and particularly the peoples of Eastern Europe, who is really in charge. Those reminders extend to national leaders, as East German Council of State Chairman Erich Hon-ecker learned last fall when the Soviets vetoed his already announced visit to Bonn.

East European leaders don't particularly like this ham-fisted treatment. But even if they had the will to

buck, they would know that there are always the Soviet assassins lurking in the shadows. As we said at the outset, official murder is an instrument of Soviet policy.

It is this kind of empire that Ronald Reagan hoped to establish at least a *modus vivendi* with through arms-control talks and an offer to meet with the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. Good will has been rewarded by the murder of an American officer, for reasons that only someone privy to the inner workings of the Soviet empire would be likely to understand. Mr. Reagan says the killing makes him "even more anxious" to have a summit with Mr. Gorbachev. Be that as it may, whoever ordered the killing of Maj. Nicholson has at least ensured that if there is a summit, it will be one unaccompanied by the illusions and naive expectations that have so often accompanied those of the past.